



# “SIGNIFICANT TACTICAL POLICE CASES:

## Learning from Past Events to Improve upon Future Responses” by Tom Mijares and Ron McCarthy

### Reviewed by Kevin W. Jennings

Tom Mijares and Ron McCarthy are both experienced tactical officers from the Detroit and Los Angeles police departments, respectively. They have used their firsthand experience, training and knowledge of law enforcement tactics to write a book about significant tactical incidents. The authors present each occurrence in a way that takes the reader beyond the media portrayal of what happened by developing an understanding of why certain decisions were made, as well as what law enforcement can (and did) learn from the incident. It is a common law enforcement practice to perform an after-action review of major critical incidents so that the officers involved can assess their own actions and discuss what worked and what failed in an effort to improve their response in the next critical incident. This book brings that same approach to tactical incidents from both the distant and recent past.

Each chapter covers a different major event. These situations range in time from the ancient world to only a few years ago, and cover locations from the United States to Europe, the Middle East and Africa. Understandably, incidents

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that were recent enough to still be under investigation or still involved in court proceedings were not considered for inclusion.

The chapters are split into three main sections. The first portion gives a pre-incident context to the rest of the chapter. This segment allows the reader to understand how the situation developed and what motivations the assorted perpetrators involved may have held prior to the actual tactical intervention. The second section of each chapter focuses on the tactical response to the crime that occurred. It covers the officers' actions and reasons for those actions. The third section describes the

aftermath of the incident and the lessons that law enforcement learned (or should have learned) in each case.

The book does an admirable job briefing the reader about each of the 23 cases covered. The reader is left with an understanding of the most important parts of each case, and why these particular case histories should be studied. None of the cases seem out of place or extraneous. The chronological organization helps the reader see how the lessons learned from the earlier cases were put to use in the later cases, and the authors make sure to explicitly show how each incident was influenced by the last. The diverse selection

of cases demonstrates not only the long-term evolution of tactical concepts and knowledge, but also underlines the ways in which law enforcement agencies can learn from their counterparts across the globe.

For the reader who is not a police officer, the authors' writing style may be disconcerting. It would not be surprising to learn that they were both taught to write by Joe Friday of *Dragnet* fame. The book follows a "just the facts, ma'am," approach. This style allows the authors to remain objective throughout their analyses as well as be critical without finger pointing. They examine each case in terms of the standards of the tactical profession without involving personalities.

Additionally, the book spends only one chapter on each event, when each event could easily be a book (or many books) on its own. The authors put

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the most important information about the incident into the narrative, but they freely admit that space limitations did not allow them to anticipate and answer every question fully and to describe the totality of the circumstances and aftermath of each event.

Overall, this book is compelling, informative and incredibly interesting. Each chapter leaves the reader engaged and wanting to learn more about the incident it covered. I highly recommend it for anyone in tactical law enforcement,

crisis negotiations, law enforcement management or any related fields. It demonstrates that lessons learned from historical events are just as relevant today as they were when they occurred. These lessons could very easily prevent a lawsuit or save the life of an officer, bystander or even an offender. More importantly, the lessons could possibly prevent a situation from becoming a crisis in the first place. ■

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